

The Greatness of
Abraham
Lincoln

By Frederick Howard Wines, LL. D.

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The Greatness of Abraham Lincoln:

A N A D D R E S S

Delivered at the Lincoln Monument
On Decoration Day,
May 30, 1905,

BY

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SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS:
1905.



The Greatness of Abraham Lincoln.

There is nothing new to be said about Abraham Lincoln. On this day consecrated to the memory of our heroic dead, of whom he is the most illustrious, it is nevertheless a sad but pleasant duty to recall him to mind and place our humble tribute of grateful appreciation upon his tomb. Especially is it appropriate that this simple ceremonial be not neglected or unworthily performed in the town where he lived, from which he went forth, a knight without fear and without reproach, and to it he returned, crowned with the glory of martyrdom. On this spot a nation plunged in grief laid his beloved dust to rest in the grave. There are those among us who knew him as no others had the opportunity to know him. Around the head of every departed hero a cloud gathers, large in proportion to the height to which he towered above his fellows. It takes the shape of a halo, it changes color with the lapse of years, as the sky bursts into flame when the sun's level rays gild the eastern or western horizon; but, as the light of the noonday sun is white, so, in the light of historical criticism, that which was mythical fades away, and the true image of the man appears. The difficult task that I have set myself, on this occasion, is to draw a truthful portrait of Lincoln, one whose verisimilitude will be felt and acknowledged by those of his townsmen and contemporaries still living, whose mouthpiece for the moment I would fain make myself; for my eyes never beheld him except in death.

Nature made Lincoln great. That his greatness was not always recognized by those who saw him in the undress which was natural to him, is not surprising. A mine does not reveal its hidden treasure until it is opened. His ungainly figure was the casket in which Nature had deposited a gem of priceless, unsuspected value, a new soul, and such a one as his neighbors, his country and the world did not dream to exist upon earth.

Because he was not understood, and is not yet understood, the imagination clothes with him mystery and is prone to regard his career as a miracle. An appreciative, sympathetic biographer has even said of him that "he was an enigma to all men." From this view I venture to dissent. There is indeed a sense in which every man is an enigma to every other. No man can or will unveil himself to any other, except in part. No two men touch at all points, therefore no two can comprehend each other, except in part. We are all many-sided; Lincoln was so to a degree far beyond most men. He was reticent by nature, did his own thinking, acted upon his own judgment, gave his entire confidence to no one, rarely sought advice, and said no more upon any occasion than he chose to say. Genius is always inexplicable.

It has been truly said that "to understand a thing is to perceive its relations." To understand Lincoln, we must comprehend his relations. He was of pioneer stock, and his early life was that of a pioneer. How inadequate, if not how false, is the conception formed of pioneer life by one who has not himself shared it, who knows the backwoods and the frontier only by hearsay and report, who has never stood where he could see the tide of emigration flow past him over the prairies and plains of the great west! A portrait must

have a background. Is it reasonable to suppose that any but a frontiersman can so paint the reflected lights and shadows as to bring into strong relief that gigantic figure? As well might we expect a foreigner, with European traditions and prejudices, who has never crossed the Atlantic ocean, to picture to himself the new world as it really is. A gulf as wide, as deep as that ocean separates, too, the mere litterateur and scholar from the able and successful man who has not enjoyed the same advantages of a literary training. Everything that books contain must have been known by somebody, before a book about it could be written. Book learning is knowledge at second hand on testimony, to be received by faith. Lincoln, like all great men who are self-made, looked man and nature directly in the face.

It was probably well for him, and for us, that he did not receive an academic education. The men of whom this can be said are not many, but he must be numbered among them. The knowledge of books is not the knowledge of men, and for one in public life the knowledge of men is of greater consequence than that of books. The farm, the flatboat, the country store, the judicial circuit, brought him into touch with the people as the university never could have done. The university would have removed him to too great a distance from them. The effort involved in acquiring knowledge by his unaided exertions imparted additional vigor to his mind. The sense of his ignorance of many things taught within college walls developed within him the grace of intellectual humility, that prime condition of intellectual greatness. And his powers were not dissipated by diversion from the main subject upon which his attention was concentrated—law and politics, or the science and art of government. So far from be-

ing illiterate, however, he was an indefatigable student, in his early youth, and later in life, for instance, at Vandalia, where, it is said, while in the legislature, he read everything in the state library bearing upon the special theme which he sought to master. He took nothing into his mind that he did not assimilate, he had a retentive memory, all that he acquired was a permanent possession, which became a part, so to speak, of himself.

He was self-educated, but the remains of his personal library attest the fact that, when he was a law student in the office of John T. Stuart, he had studied with care all the text-books on mathematics, physics and belles lettres which were at that time included in the curriculum of Yale College. He probably knew them better than most Yale graduates. He never acquired a knowledge of any language but his mother-tongue; but his mastery of English style, as shown in the Gettysburg address and in his second inaugural, both of which are numbered among the masterpieces of literature, was due to his remarkable familiarity with Shakespeare and the Bible.

It was only by slow degrees that his ability and attainments became apparent to the world. There is still, perhaps, in certain circles, too strong a disposition to measure him by inapplicable and artificial standards.

The greatness of a man consists not in what he does, but in what he is. What he does proves what he is. He grows by doing, of course. He may be great, but never have an opportunity to show to the world to his real capacity. Nature has always in reserve an unlimited supply of great men, for whose services she has no actual need. For the want of scope and exercise for his talents a man essentially great may never bring his powers to the point of full fruitage. Men are like

trees. To produce a sequoia, such as we see in the valley of the Yosemite, there is needed first the seed of a sequoia, and after that the conditions of soil and climate favorable to its growth. That which was in the seed comes out of it; had it not been there, it would not have come out. Apply this to Abraham Lincoln. Contrast him with the men who had opportunities but little inferior to his own, but who failed to profit by them, because they were of inferior calibre. He did the great things he did, because he was great. He would have been great, had he never done them, being what God made him, though we might never have found it out. That is the central truth on which I beg you to fix your attention, for all that I may say will be by way of illustrating it and pressing it home.

Of his physique I shall say little. His size and his strength are proverbial. As to his health, I observe that none of his biographers refer to any serious illness from which he ever suffered. He was subject to fits of terrible nervous depression, especially in early manhood, but they seem to have been temperamental, and not the result of physical exhaustion. He is commonly said to have been of homely features; but I have heard an artist, a sculptor, contend that this is a matter of opinion. Beauty is not an objective fact, but a subjective impression; and for his part, he saw in him the beauty of rugged strength, of honesty and kindness, and he declared his face to be a rare and perfect specimen of the highest type of manly beauty, such as that of Julius Caesar.

When we consider his intellectual qualities, there can be no question that love of the truth was the master passion of his soul. Had he lived in the days of coat armor, the legend upon his shield might well have been the saying of Solomon, or of some one as wise as Solo-

mon, "Buy the truth and sell it not." He sought for wisdom as for hid treasure. How he toiled, alone, without a teacher, and in the face of difficulties which in the case of most boys would have proved insurmountable, to acquire the rudiments of knowledge! Truth had such an affinity for his mind that he may almost be said to have divined it by intuition. This love of truth was like an inward light. It enabled him to see all things in perspective. His mind was like a camera. He believed in the truth. He identified his fortunes with it, casting himself upon its bosom as he launched his flatboat upon the current of the Mississippi, with full assurance that its majestic flow would bear him to his desired and destined haven. The larger the truth, the greater his confidence in it. Without technical scientific training, he grasped the basic conception of science, that of the sequence of cause and effect in an unbroken series, the uniformity, universality, and immutability of natural law. Unread in metaphysics, he was a student of history, and felt that he and all men and all events are controlled by that mysterious power which the ignorant call fate, the wise law, and the religious providence. A year before his death he wrote to a friend, "I claim not to have controlled events but confess plainly that events have controlled me." This simple faith was the secret of his patient optimism, his unsurpassed courage, his fidelity to every trust.

Closely allied to this supreme love of truth was his exquisite sense of right. Right is truth in action. Truth and righteousness were the two poles of the axis around which his entire being revolved with an unvarying steadiness resembling the regularity of the diurnal motion of the globe.

From a very early age he was dimly conscious of his budding powers, and restlessly sought a vent for their

exercise and display. Ambition is innate in every superior mind. His ambition was inseparably united to the burning wish to be of service to mankind. In his first address to his constituents he said, "I have no other [ambition] so great as that of being truly esteemed by my fellow-men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem." At the moment of the most profound gloom into which he ever fell, he said, "I have an irrepressible desire to live till I can be assured that the world is a little better for my having lived in it." In his address before the Springfield Lyceum he declared that the ambition of many men aspires to nothing higher than the holding of public office—a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or presidential chair, "but such belong not to the family of the lion or the tribe of the eagle." "Towering genius," he continued, "thirsts and burns for distinction; and if possible it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving freemen." The nature of the distinction which he coveted, and which he ultimately achieved, is foreshadowed in this youthful production. He obeyed the injunction of Emerson, he "hitched his wagon to a star."

He was but twenty-three years of age when, untried and unknown, without backing of any description, he announced himself as a candidate for the legislature, quaintly remarking: "If elected, I shall be thankful; if not, it will be all the same." He was but two years older when his ambition was gratified. For four successive terms, covering a period of eight years, his constituents returned him to the lower house. Twice in succession he was selected by his Whig colleagues as their candidate for the speakership, and they went down to defeat bearing a banner inscribed with his name. Both in 1840 and in 1844 his name was on their elec-

toral ticket. At the age of thirty-seven he was sent to Washington as Congressman, the only Whig Congressman from his state. From that time forward, he was admittedly the foremost man of his party in Illinois; three times its candidate for a seat in the United States Senate—in 1849, when he was defeated by Shields, in 1855, when, in order to defeat Matteson, he withdrew in favor of Trumbull, and in 1859, when he was beaten by Douglas.

Such honors do not come by accident, nor to men unworthy of them. His social qualities, his kindness of heart, his affability, his sense of humor and skill as a raconteur, all contributed to render him popular. He had the tender sympathy for men, and even for animals, which caused him to spend an hour in replacing in their nest two half-fledged birds, and then apologize for it in the words, "I could not have slept well to-night, if I had not saved those birds; their cries would have rung in my ears." It afterward impelled him to pardon deserters, and to say, when urged to retaliate the cruelty of Andersonville in kind, "I never can; I can never starve men like that." He expressed the core of his great heart, when he remarked of himself, "Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow." But popularity does not insure permanent precedence; it is as ephemeral as the ever veering wind. Leadership depends on the enduring qualities of head and heart of him who retains through life his ascendancy over men.

Neither can we account for such continued ascendancy by attributing it to skill in the arts of the political manipulator. He knew those arts. Within the limits of integrity and honor, he may be said to have practised them. He was a politician. No man not a poli-

tician is qualified to be governor of a state or president of the republic. A more astute politician this country has perhaps never known. Among his friends were many politicians less scrupulous than himself, for whose actions he cannot be held personally responsible. But what is a politician? What is the distinction between a politician and a statesman?

It is the difference between an end and the means to that end. A statesman is one who has clearly in mind some patriotic purpose; a politician is one who perceives the processes by which alone that purpose can be accomplished. Political ends must be reached, and are arrived at, by political processes; they can be attained in no other way. This Mr. Lincoln well knew, and his conduct proves it. The difference between a statesman and a politician may be illustrated by comparing the former to the engineer who constructs a railway, but the latter to the engineer who sits in the cab of the locomotive which he drives over the rails after they have been laid. A road must run somewhere. The politician who has no goal in sight other than an office for himself will be apt to drive the car of state into the ditch or into the river. The self-seeking political schemer and wireworker is never a patriot, never a statesman. This was not the type of man God gave to this nation in the person of Abraham Lincoln. He could say of himself in all candor and in truth, "I have never done an official act with a view to promote my personal aggrandizement." He subordinated his personal ambitions to the public good. His most intimate friend says of him, "He never believed in political combinations," and again, "He was much more eager for the second nomination than for the first, yet from the beginning he discouraged all efforts on the part of his friends to obtain it." To one of his appointees, speak-

ing of his possible use of his position to influence the result of a pending election, he wrote these memorable words: "My wish is that you will do just as you think fit with your own suffrage in the case, and not constrain any of your subordinates to do other than he thinks fit with his." No more need be said, in order to differentiate him from politicians of the baser sort, who seek to shield themselves from condemnation by pleading his example in justification of their course.

No, Lincoln had one great end in view throughout his life, from its beginning to its close. It was the extinction of slavery. Its gradual extinction, mark you, not its sudden and violent abolition. He hated slavery as intensely as did Lovejoy or Sumner or Seward or Chase or Giddings. But he was like Henry Clay, a gradual emancipationist, a colonizationist. He advocated compensation to the slave-holder. This is one reason why he was misunderstood. Of the institution as an institution, he said: "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." He quoted, as expressing his own sentiment, the words of Jefferson, himself a slave-holder: "This momentous question, like a fire-bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror." Who does not recall the language of his second inaugural with reference to it? "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Never for one moment did he doubt that freedom would in the end triumph over slavery, because he had

implicit faith in the ultimate victory of truth over error, the ultimate triumph of right over wrong. It was his fortune to live at an epoch when this was the precise issue which absorbed the attention of the American people, to the exclusion of all minor issues which had previously divided them. Behold the hour and the man!

From the day when his only term in Congress came to an end in 1849, he was, as has already been said, the recognized leader of his party in Illinois. His elevation to the presidency was no sudden, miraculous event. The steps that led to this happy consummation are easily traced in history. They were simple, natural, and in a sense inevitable.

In Congress, while he had voted the supplies needed with which to carry on the Mexican war, he had openly shown his dislike for it and disapproval of President Polk's method of beginning it. He had voted for the Wilmot proviso, forbidding the establishment of slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico, which was agreed to by the House, but rejected by the Senate. In the Compromise of 1850, shaped by Henry Clay, (who in his old age had been recalled from retirement for that purpose), California was admitted as a free state, but from the newly organized territories of Utah and New Mexico slavery was not excluded. Lincoln would have preferred to have had it otherwise, but he bowed to the law and to the judgment of others, his political friends, and accepted the situation. The next five years of his life were for him years of comparative political quiescence. The Compromise of 1850 had been endorsed in the political platforms of both parties. The Whig party was in a semi-moribund state. And the question of the extension of slavery was generally held and believed to have been adjusted for all time by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, establishing the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$,

known as Mason and Dixon's line, north of which slavery was never to be allowed. It was then that Douglas struck a ponderous blow upon the fire-bell of Jefferson, whose clangor resounded through the land, arousing everybody, north and south alike. Douglas, as chairman of the Senate committee on territories, reported with favorable recommendation the famous Kansas-Nebraska bill, annulling the Missouri Compromise, which was declared to be inoperative and void. This was in January, 1854.

Lincoln at once sprang into the ring as champion of the opposition to this revolutionary measure.

No Illinoian would detract in the smallest degree from the well-earned, well-merited fame of Senator Douglas. In this state at least, the names of Lincoln and Douglas lead all the rest. These two were rivals at all points. Their respective careers abound in parallels and in contrasts, of which it is hard to say which were the most wonderful. Douglas, like Lincoln, was both a politician and a statesman; but in Lincoln the politician was subordinated to the statesman. This cannot be said of Douglas with equal assurance. It would, however, be unfair to him to question the sincerity of his convictions or to insinuate that his motives, though they may have been mixed, were not consistent with genuine love of country. He made a mistake, a fatal mistake. His ability no one denies. His soubriquet was "The Little Giant." The Whigs were afraid of him. Make him out to be never so great, the fact remains that Lincoln was greater. No man but Lincoln was ever put up to meet him in debate. Lincoln never feared to measure swords with him, anywhere or at any time. At the State Fair, which was held in Springfield in October, 1854, Douglas defended his position and his con-

duct as a senator from the free state of Illinois. The clarion voice of Lincoln rang out in reply, with such effect that his political friends requested him in writing to follow Douglas up until the election. They clashed again at Peoria, when Douglas asked him to desist, and accordingly it was agreed that there should be no more joint discussion between them during that campaign.

The Republican party was organized in 1856—in this state at Bloomington, in the nation at Philadelphia, where 110 votes (a little less than one-third) were registered as in favor of Lincoln for vice-president on the ticket with Fremont. His name was placed by the Republicans of Illinois that year on their electoral ticket. He would have been the candidate of the party for governor, had he not declined the honor in advance. He threw himself with ardor into the campaign as a private serving in the ranks. None the less on that account was he the real leader in the fray.

Those were the days of “bleeding Kansas” and of the Dred Scott decision. The Nebraska Bill contained what Benton characterized as “a stump speech within its belly,” declaring it to be “the true meaning and intent of this act not to legislate slavery into any territory or state, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution.” This was called popular sovereignty. The Dred Scott decision went farther. The opinion, in the nature of an obiter dictum, was expressed, that Congress had no power to exclude slavery from the territories. This was a set-back to popular sovereignty, from an unexpected source. Douglas cheerfully brushed it to one side with the remark that without friendly legislation to protect the property in man, slavery might,

under that decision, be lawful in a territory, but it would be impossible. His unfortunate dilemma was that, to become president, he had to persuade the south that his political convictions were favorable to the extension of slavery into the territories, and at the same time to satisfy the north that they were not such as to result in its extension. It was upon the horns of this dilemma that Lincoln finally succeeded in impaling him. Twice in succession the Democratic party had refused to name Douglas as its candidate for the presidency. The Nebraska Bill had availed him nought. He then turned back from the south to the north, and when Kansas knocked for admission to the Union with the Lecompton Constitution in her hand, he broke with James Buchanan, and voted against it. He did right, and his conduct in that regard needs no apology, no defense. So great were his powers of persuasion, that he almost succeeded in inducing the Republican party to adopt him as its favorite son, deposing Lincoln from the place he held in its councils and in its esteem, in order that his lifelong rival—a man who “cared not whether slavery be voted down or voted up”—might become the beneficiary of the change of leadership which even Horace Greeley approved and advocated. Stephen A. Douglas was indeed a wonderful man.

But in 1858 he was the candidate of the Democratic party in Illinois for the senatorship, to succeed himself. The Republican state convention, at Springfield, resolved: “That Abraham Lincoln is our first and only choice for United States Senator to fill the vacancy about to be created by the expiration of Mr. Douglas’ term of office.” The issue thus joined was personal, but it was more than that: it was an issue of principle. From the foundation of the Republic two opposite beliefs had

been contending for political mastery. The destiny of the nation was involved in the choice to be made between them. Lincoln knew it. He was no time-server, no coward. A braver man never lived. He had faith in himself, but he had still greater faith in the rock of truth on which his feet were planted. His moral judgments were his own. On an ethical question he was never known to ask or accept advice. This was an ethical question. Accordingly, in his speech of acceptance, he made the bold assertion: “‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it becomes alike lawful in all the states—old as well as new, north as well as south.”

Then the storm broke. Few were the friends who dared to say that he was right. The great majority condemned this utterance. Your politician is a timorous creature, short-sighted, with eyes upon the ground, not looking upward to the sky, who sees in his own shadow a ghost with gory locks, but the sun that casts that shadow is for him as if it were not. It was instinctively felt by every Republican that the senatorship was lost, as indeed it proved to be. The vision of a larger but delayed triumph was obscured by the apprehension of present defeat. But Lincoln knew. He had made his point. As a politician, to take no higher view of the situation, he was greater than them all, greater

than any man in these United States. Politics is a game. It may be likened to a game of chess. A first-rate player says to his opponent, "That move will beat you." It only remains to play the game out. At the right moment he places a piece where, at the crisis of the game, it will block any combination his adversary may then be able to make. Lincoln knew as well, when he delivered that memorable speech, that on the main issue, of which he never lost sight, Douglas and his party were hopelessly beaten, as when, in the joint debate between them, he put the unanswerable interrogatory, unanswerable by a northern candidate for the presidency, I mean: "Can the people of a territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a state constitution?" Exception was taken to that question also by his timid supporters. But what could Douglas reply? If yes, he broke with the south; if no, he cut loose from the north. His hand was forced. If he should be elected to a seat in the senate, he could never be president; if he wanted the presidency, he must relinquish the senatorship. He was bound to lose, and Lincoln was sure of winning, one or the other, while it was within the limits of possibility that Lincoln might win both. But that was a small matter, even in Lincoln's estimation, in comparison with the fact that his election to either position signified the victory of the principles for which he stood, the triumph of truth and right, and the salvation of the country.

The hour is passing. I think I need say no more about that debate, the greatest political debate in the history of any nation, whose event was to decide the destiny not only of this nation, but in time to come that of the world, the fate of modern civilization. Let us

hasten on to the meeting of the Chicago Convention. Lincoln had disposed of Douglas, who was nominated by a minority of his party, after a bolt, and received the electoral vote of a single state, that of Missouri. There remained between Lincoln and the goal of his ambition but one man, William H. Seward of New York. Why was Lincoln preferred to Seward as the standard-bearer of his party, the commander-in-chief of the army and navy in the coming conflict? It has been alleged that a combination was effected between the friends of Lincoln and those of Simon Cameron, by which the vote of Pennsylvania was cast for Lincoln in the convention, in return for a pledge that Cameron should be given a seat in the cabinet. In what purports to be a memorandum of this agreement, in four articles, the second reads, "Lincoln's friends have no actual authority—none but a moral right." Lincoln had written to David Davis, "Make no contracts that will bind me." He gave Cameron the war portfolio because he believed it wise so to do, not because he admitted the binding obligation of that pledge. It might be said that Seward put himself out of the running, when he enunciated his belief in the doctrine of the higher law, because, whatever truth there may be in that dogma, in its application to individual conduct, it is inapplicable in politics, for the reason that no executive officer of the government may, consistently with his oath of office, set himself and his conscience above the constitution and the law of the land. Lincoln did not make that mistake. In his letter to Davis he said: "Lincoln agrees with Seward in the irrepressible conflict idea, and in negro equality, but he is opposed to Seward's higher law." The truth is that Lincoln was preferred to Seward because he was the greater man of the two, as he showed himself to be within thirty days after his inauguration.

The theme of Lincoln's greatness is inexhaustible. This address is not a biographical sketch, still less does it purport to be a history of his times. It would nevertheless be incomplete, even as an estimate of the man in his relation to the past and to the future, if no reference were made in it to the conduct of the Civil War, and to the act on which his fame principally rests, as the Great Emancipator. It is the law of finite existence that every man, however great, has his limitations. Lincoln was not exempt from the operation of this law. He could not sing; he failed to appreciate the beauty of nature; he had no love for flowers; he never read a novel through, his whole life long. Among the things he did not claim to know was the art of war. He hated war. He made mistakes, especially during the first two years of the war, in the selection of generals. Some of them were sad failures, and he bore with them, perhaps, longer than he should have done. But it is a noteworthy fact, as the record shows, that there was scarcely a serious military blunder committed by any of them against which he did not protest in advance. He followed every move upon the field of battle, with minute attention to every detail. Often discouraged, he never despaired. His patience, his endurance, his courage, his sagacity, his devotion, were sublime.

Never before, in the history of mankind, had any man such a burden to carry, such a task to perform. The plurality—not the majority—of voters to whom he owed his election included the most incongruous and discordant elements, Whigs and Democrats, slaveholders and abolitionists, held together in face of an impending crisis by the shibboleth of anti-Nebraska. They had to be fused into something like a homogeneous mass. There were the jealous friends of rival candidates for the nomi-

nation to be placated. To nine-tenths of the people he was a stranger. Many believed him to be an accident, many thought him incompetent, and some made faces at him and cried at the top of their voices that he was an ignoramus, a buffoon, an ape, a baboon. Scarcely had he bidden farewell to his neighbors and asked their prayers for himself and their country, than he was forced to address himself to the thankless task of explaining himself, making himself known to the public. He was threatened even then with assassination. When he took the oath of office, in a city so hostile to him, although the capital of the nation, that every military precaution had been taken in advance for his personal safety, six states had already seceded, his arsenals had been plundered, his troops scattered, many of his forts seized or dismantled. Advisers buzzed in his ears, thicker than the flies in Egypt; and office-seekers dogged his steps, more hungry than the devouring locusts, whom he could not, like Moses, drive into the Red Sea. In less than six weeks from his inauguration civil war had broken out. He had to create an army, to equip it, to organize it, to drill it and make it ready to take the field. Without a navy, he had to establish a blockade, from Norfolk to Galveston. The Confederate army advanced to within ten miles of Washington. Then arose the senseless cry, "On to Richmond!" followed by the disaster of Bull Run, and the interminable, fruitless campaign in the Peninsula, unrelieved by a single victory of any moment. Neither McClellan in the east nor Fremont in the west met his expectations. Political generals were the plague of his life; they told him what his civil duties were, and usurped his powers, issuing emancipation proclamations on their own responsibility, which he had to modify or disavow. No foreign power

was his friend, unless we except Russia. England was his secret foe. From her ports Confederate cruisers went forth to harry American commerce, and her bankers loaned money to the insurgent government. To pay his soldiers and sailors he had to improvise a paper currency, which he knew, in case of failure, might never be redeemed. We won battles, and we lost them. We advanced and we retreated. His patriotic soul was torn with anxiety as to the outcome. And there were foes in his rear, as well as in front of him—detractors, prophets of evil, men openly or secretly disloyal, speculators in calamity, vampires who gorged themselves to repletion on human blood. Speaking to you, comrades, I, a soldier, thank God that through good report and through evil report none of us ever faltered or flinched, but we stood to our guns to the last.

We thank God, too, for Grant, who fought the battle of Belmont, captured Forts Henry and Donelson, invested and took Vicksburg, was in command at Chattanooga, accomplished in Virginia what no general before him could do, and at last received the sword of Lee at Appomattox and sent home our brave but misguided brothers, our opponents on many a hard fought field, with their horses, their side-arms and his blessing. Others there were, whom it grieves me not to name, but the time is too short, and Grant was the noblest Roman of them all. Let him stand as a symbol of all the rest.

Some psychologist has said that will-power is the power of resistance. Since it is easy to follow the suggestion of impulse and inclination, it requires no extraordinary exercise of volition to do that; but inhibition is quite another matter. Lincoln revealed his strength in what he did not do, quite as much as in what he did. We have noted his intense feeling on the question of

slavery; we have seen that his cardinal aim in life was to confine it to its actual area, with a view to its ultimate extinction. But the moment that he became responsible to the nation for his official acts, he declared that it was not his intention to interfere with it, where it was already recognized and protected by law. With that accurate sense of proportion by which he was distinguished, he proclaimed the primary purpose of the war to be, not the destruction of slavery, but the preservation of the Union. With or without slavery, he would save the Union; without it if he could, with it if he must. This simple but obvious analysis of the complex problem before him, this insistence upon dealing first with the most salient element in it, leaving the deeper question for subsequent solution, though it was offensive to many radical anti-slavery men, was wise and politic. By insisting upon it, he prevented the secession of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri. When the hour arrived at which emancipation seemed to be indicated as a prudent war measure, calculated to hasten the collapse of the Confederacy, he issued it of his own motion, in his own words, and at his own selected time; dividing it into two movements, so to speak, two manifestos, the first announcing his purpose of manumission, the second carrying it out. It applied only to those portions of the country in actual rebellion on the first day of January, 1863. One year later, the thirteenth constitutional amendment was introduced in Congress, annihilating slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, wherever the jurisdiction of the United States extends. Two years later, it was adopted. Illinois was first of all the states to ratify it, greatly to the President's joy.

Without detracting from the lustre attaching to the

achievements of any man or of any state, Illinois can point to her war record with peculiar pride. She gave to the country Lincoln, Grant and Logan. It was a senator from Illinois, Lyman Trumbull, who, as chairman of the committee on judiciary, framed and reported the thirteenth amendment, by which the bolt forged by Lincoln in the emancipation proclamation was riveted on the other side. Nor can it ever be forgotten, that Douglas himself, when he beheld the conflagration which his indiscretion had kindled, severed every tie that bound him to the past and declared that, with an army marching upon the capital, there remained but one thing to do ; the most direct road to peace was the most stupendous preparation for war, there could be no neutrals in such a struggle, and it was the duty of every lover of the flag to rally to its support.

But what are leaders, without followers? What are generals, without the rank and file? As the power generated by a dynamo is discharged through a single point, so a leader is impotent, unless the people are behind him and with him. The power itself is from God ; it is drawn from the everlasting, inexhaustible reservoir of nature. As sons of Illinois, by birth or by adoption, we hold in eternal honor the memories of the men, officers and privates alike, who with Grant ascended the Tennessee, sailed or marched down the Mississippi, and shared with him the glories of Vicksburg, Chattanooga, the Wilderness, and Spottsylvania ; who with Sherman were at Atlanta, and made with him that daring march to the sea ; who with Meade saw the crest of the rising tide of rebellion break against the stone wall by the orchard and the cemetery at Gettysburg ; who with Sheridan cleared the valley of the Shenandoah and fought the battle of Five Forks. Wherever they were, there

or elsewhere, on the land or on the sea, of the great majority it can now be said, "Their swords are rust, their bones are dust, their souls are with the saints, we trust." A few of us still survive, to plant flowers upon their graves and water them with our tears.

The story of the surrender and of the assassination, both occurring within the space of one short week, is too fresh in your minds to demand retelling. That of Lincoln's death is too sad. It would cause you, even now, forty years afterward, too much pain. He was the man in the parable, whose ten talents had gained ten other talents beside them, to whom the Master could say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." He gave the crowning proof of love; he laid down his life for his friends. He was the enemy of no man. Of those in arms against the government and of their sympathizers at the north he said, on the day of the surrender: "Enemies! We must never speak of that! The south felt—Grant has said it, and we believe it—that in his death the south lost its best and truest friend. He was the friend of every man. Had he lived, what would have been the history of reconstruction? We can only speculate; we can not tell. This at least we know: that there was in his heart no bitterness, no malice, no hatred, no revenge. No man living would have so rejoiced at the sight which it is our privilege to behold, of a country reunited in fact as well as in name, with the blue and the gray drinking out of the same canteen. Having obtained a good report through faith, he received not the promise; but like Moses, he saw the promised land from the top of the mountains of Nebo. And he was not, for God took him.





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